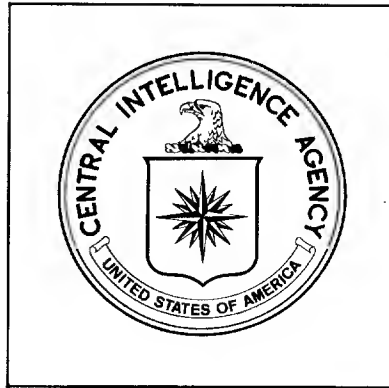


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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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~~SECRET~~Bahrain*Stationing Agreement*

Bahrain's foreign minister has informed the US ambassador in Manama that the US navy's Middle East Force must leave the Persian Gulf island by June 30, 1977. Bahrain will extend the stationing agreement until that time on the basis of understandings reached in recent talks.

Bahrain's royal family has long felt that the US naval force reinforced the regime's position by adding to the security of the island. Recently, however, the government has come under pressure, both from the National Assembly and from neighboring Persian Gulf states, to terminate the agreement.

Bahrain's decision seems to have been sparked in part by proposals circulating in the Gulf region for some kind of security pact. The proposals have been accompanied by statements from regional leaders opposing the presence of foreign powers in the area. The foreign minister explained that although his government considers any such pact to be years away, it wishes to strengthen its nationalist credentials for bargaining purposes. (SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM)



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SECRETUSSR - Middle East*Soviet Views*

The acting chief of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Middle East division reaffirmed, in a recent discussion with a US official in Moscow, that the Soviets do not intend to push for an early reconvening of the Geneva peace conference. The Soviet suggested that Moscow believes the Middle East initiative again rests with the US and that there is little the Soviets can do at the moment. His remarks are in line with the minimal public attention Moscow has been giving the Middle East situation.

The Soviet official did reiterate the Soviet contention that attempts at a Middle East settlement will prove futile unless the interests of other parties, including the Soviets, are taken into account. He professed to be "astonished" that the US seemed to be ignoring the Palestinian question, which he said is central. Although the Soviet was notably flexible on Palestinian attendance at Geneva, the clear implication of his remarks was that the Soviets retain the option of intensifying their support of Palestinian demands if the US continues to exclude Moscow from the settlement process.

He made no effort to suggest that the developing Soviet-Libyan relationship gave the USSR a new iron in the Middle East fire, or that Moscow would move to support the "rejectionists" if it continued to be cut out of the negotiating process. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/BACKGROUND USE ONLY)

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